

BEAR RIVER

Rural Goes High-Tech

By Peri Kinder

FAST FACTS:

Counties: Cache, Rich, Box Elder

Major Cities: Logan (47,357), Brigham City (18,355), Smithfield (7,589)

Regional Civilian Labor Force: 78,984

Per Capita Income: \$23,857 (Box Elder), \$27,353 (Rich), \$23,526 (Cache)

Major Employers: Utah State University, ICON Health and Fitness, Swift Beef Company, Rich County School District, Lodge at Bear Lake LLC, Majestic Ranch Academy, ATK Launch Systems, Autoliv, La Z Boy

Average Price of Homes, Year End 2006:

Brigham/Tremonton-\$149,230; Cache/Rich-\$174,610



In the northern reaches of the state lies an area known by most Utahns for its verdant valleys, agricultural roots and rural lifestyle. But, with most of the Bear River area less than two hours from Salt Lake's international airport, the economic landscape actually rests somewhere between rural and commercial. With Utah State University anchoring much of the innovation and industry, Cache County serves as a beacon of development to its agricultural surroundings.

RICH COUNTY

Nestled in the northeastern corner of Utah, Rich County is a narrow stretch of land that hides a wealth of natural beauty and a serene lifestyle. From dense forest areas to rich agricultural farmland, the area is a scenic byway that attracts more than 600,000 tourists every year. Located halfway between the Jackson Hole/Yellowstone area and Salt Lake City, Rich County is a favorite stopping place for families, and the very best place to get a fresh milkshake made with famous Bear Lake raspberries.

The down-home environment in the county is a comforting respite from the daily grind of everyday life. In Rich County, tourism is a major industry and as the Bear Lake area continues to recover after years of drought, economic development is showing steady progress.

"What we're experiencing right now is a growth in tourism," says Judy Holbrook, director of tourism for the Bear Lake area. "Northern Utah has a lot to offer people traveling through here. We provide unique attractions and an Old West experience." The Pickleville Playhouse is an example of a quaint theater venue.

Bear Lake is famous for its crystal-clear waters—and its mythical Bear Lake Monster. Water sports can be found all summer long with recreational rental businesses located near the lake that are more than willing to rent a Jet-Ski for a day. The lake's deep waters attract fishermen, while nearby, the



BEAR LAKE

miles of bike trails give outdoor enthusiasts a chance to see nature on a more rugged terrain.

With the increase in tourism, county officials and residents capitalize on their county's popularity with the famous Raspberry Days event every August, annual chocolate festivals and bike races that draw bigger crowds every year.

Rustic cabins are available for rent, along with private campgrounds for the back-to-nature crowd, and for families who want a more luxurious vacation, sumptuous condos and comfy hotels offer a relaxing diversion from campfires.

Although Rich County is famous for its summer activities, the winter sports program in the area is also gaining ground. The Bear Lake Golf Course and Logan Canyon feature miles of skiing along with pristine mountain views. The Bear Lake Valley is a snowmobiler's heaven with 650 miles of groomed trails just waiting for the adventurous rider. For cross-country skiers, the valley becomes a winter wonderland with skiing available the moment a person leaves his or her room.

For visitors who decide to take up residence in Rich County, they can be guaranteed a laid back lifestyle where life is more about where you are than how fast you can go somewhere else. With its population, school class sizes in the county are much smaller than classes found in other parts of the state.

"I love it here because I'm just a small-town girl," Holbrook says. "We're not a very big county, but we have a great lifestyle."

BOX ELDER COUNTY

Although the last spike that connected the first transcontinental railroad was driven into the ground at Promontory Point in Box Elder County, it was hardly the end of economic development in the area. Since that day in 1869, the county has experienced slow but steady growth and is catching the eye of businesses around the country.

Big corporations like Malt-O-Meal, La-Z-Boy and ATK find the economic atmosphere in Box Elder to be better than anywhere else in the country. In

fact, Nucor, a company that creates steel and steel products, recently opened its third plant in the county. Nucor has established strong ties to the communities in Box Elder and offers jobs with good pay and great benefits.

"They compensate their employees very well," says Susan Thackeray, the economic development project coordinator for the county. "As one benefit, they give their employees \$2,000 per year to help their children with education."

Thackeray credits the workforce in the area for luring the plants into their communities. "I think it's the work mentality of the workforce, because a lot of them have been farmers and they know how to work hard. They work until the job's done." Along with the hard-working employees, the freeway system in Box Elder allows businesses easy access to highways I-15 and I-84 so companies can ship products conveniently and quickly.

Box Elder County is experiencing a large housing boom as county officials prepare the way for future workers to have good jobs and nice housing as an incentive to stay in the area. New hotels are located at Pointe Perry and in Tremonton, and Utah State University offers pre-engineering courses at the branch campus located in Brigham City.

"We just see lots of opportunities coming our way. We're seeing home growth and business growth and we're loving it," Thackeray says. "Things are good here in Box Elder."



FIGARO, UTAH FESTIVAL OPERA



WEST LIBERTY FOODS GROUNDBREAKING IN TREMONTON

CACHE COUNTY

Rounding out the top three northernmost counties, Cache County offers its own unique flavor to an already diverse landscape. Famous for its dairy products, including the popular Aggie Ice Cream and high quality Cache Valley Cheese, Cache County started out as a rural, agricultural area. But the growth of business, the increased popularity of Utah State University (located in the county seat of Logan) and an influx of "city people" has added an urban flair to the county.

The arts community has always flourished in Cache Valley and the number of live theater venues is high compared to the size of the county. Theater groups such as the Ellen Eccles Theatre and the Caine Lyric Theatre are just a couple of the locations that offer family-friendly entertainment, and the Utah Festival Opera company members have spent the last 10 years entertaining crowds and introducing residents to high-quality opera productions.

Outdoor activities are a big part of Cache County life. Hunting, fishing, boating, canoeing and rock climbing are favorite pastimes of many residents, as well as the thousands of tourists who visit the county each year. The Hardware Ranch, located in Blacksmith Fork Canyon, is one of the largest elk winter feeding programs in the country, and visitors can get up close and personal with these animals.

During the winter, sleigh rides take the adventurous into the middle of the herd for an even closer look at the native elk. Beaver Mountain Ski

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Judy Holbrook

DIRECTOR OF TOURISM,
BEAR LAKE AREA



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Resort offers slopes for downhill skiers and snowboarders that favorably compare to any other ski resort in Utah.

For small business owners, Cache County offers the perfect environment to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit. The Cache Chamber of Commerce enthusiastically supports local and small businesses, regularly awarding them for their contribution to the community. However, big business is also welcome, and the economic development plan for Cache

County stresses the importance of preparing future generations for upcoming opportunities.

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park located on the north end of campus.

With all of this exciting growth, the Bear River region has not forgotten its roots. Protecting current agribusiness and encouraging future projects and innovation are among the main concerns for civic leaders. Smart planning in the region will guarantee that the fertile land, the superior products and the peaceful lifestyle will continue well into the future.



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